

News Release

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Eight projects to receive 2017 ‘Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin’ awards

Projects that strengthen schools and communities to be recognized Oct. 31 in Wisconsin Dells

MADISON — Eight projects will receive the 2017 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities Award during a program and reception Oct. 31 in Wisconsin Dells.

Presented each year to nominated projects that “demonstrate the great potential and collaborative spirit of rural Wisconsin,” this year’s recipients join [105 exemplary programs recognized since 2005](#).

“The only way our rural communities can thrive is through intentional support and recognition of their importance to all of Wisconsin,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Those who have worked on projects receiving this year’s rural awards demonstrate that support and the collaborative spirit that makes positive things happen for kids and communities. Their efforts make our rural communities vibrant places for children to learn.”

Nominated by education and library professionals, the 2017 award winning programs will be recognized during the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance conference (Oct. 30-31). The programs are:

- Crivitz and Wausaukee School Districts, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, and River Cities Habitat for Humanity Tiny House Partnership;
- Weston Dairy Sheep Project in Cazenovia;
- Arts Integration Menomonie;
- HomeMAKER Boxes in Nekoosa;
- Vilas County Economic Development Corporation: Business Entrepreneurship, Broadband Expansion, and Fab Lab in Eagle River;
- Spooner High School Aviation Club;
- The Vinery: An Outdoor Space that Celebrates Creativity and Learning in Winter; and
- Sugar River Sugar Bush in Albany.

The awards program begins at 11:45 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31, at the Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness in Wisconsin Dells. Additional information about each project follows.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2017_87.pdf.

2017 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries, and Communities Awards

October 31, 2017 — Wisconsin Dells

The Crivitz and Wausaukeee school districts partnered with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) and River Cities Habitat for Humanity for the **Crivitz and Wausaukeee School Districts, NWTC, and River Cities Habitat for Humanity Tiny House Partnership**. Through a dual credit class, students from both the Crivitz and Wausaukeee school districts took an NWTC Building Trades class at Crivitz High School, constructing a “tiny house” that will be raffled off to support River Cities Habitat for Humanity. The non-profit group provided the materials and helped with construction of the tiny house class project. The fund-raiser is supporting the continued partnership this school year, which has building trades high-schoolers providing basic home repair and handicapped access in the Crivitz and Wausaukeee areas to community members who qualify through River Cities Habitat for Humanity.

Following a visit to the dairy sheep operation at the University of Wisconsin-Agricultural Research Center in Spooner and the Wisconsin Sheep Dairy Cooperative in Bruce and with support from local business leaders who donated funds, building materials, and other supplies, students and community members built a barn, milk house and parlor to house the **Weston Dairy Sheep Project**. The project has hosted an open house, honoring Alice in Dairyland and community supporters, and is working to establish a Hill and Valley Exploration Tour to promote rural small businesses. Middle and high school students are learning animal husbandry practices and have developed a sheep milk soap enterprise. Elementary students recently learned about wool and how to make and dye yarn. The young students also developed their literacy skills by composing descriptive writings about their experiences. The next phase of the project is to sell frozen sheep milk to a local cheese factory, Carr Valley, the project’s largest donor. Income from the sale of sheep milk will enable students to expand the project further to produce sheep milk gelato to be sold at sporting and other community events.

Arts Integration Menomonie (A.I.M.), an arts education program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, integrates the arts into the community and neighboring schools. From painting murals in school buildings to evening programs for children to work on art projects with future art teachers, the A.I.M. partnership promotes collaborative models of teaching among classroom teachers and UW-Stout students. The outcomes of the partnership have potential to enhance teacher competence and confidence and to improve the retention of pre-service teachers and early career teachers within the teaching profession. Another impact of the arts integration partnership is to improve appreciation for the arts through evenings of entertainment or enrichment at the Mable Tainter Center for the Arts, a partner in the project.

Collaboration among Nekoosa Public Schools, University of Wisconsin-Extension Wood County, and the city of Nekoosa, along with the support of the Library Board of Trustees and a generous donation by Charles and JoAnn Lester Library made **HomeMAKER Boxes** a reality. The program takes the makerspace concept one step further, allowing library patrons to check out equipment for home use. Boxes fill a wide range of interests including educational kids’ toys, a traveling telescope, a school quality microscope with slides, a sewing machine, quilt rack for tying quilts, crochet and knitting tools, canning equipment, pressure cooker, and assorted outdoor recreation equipment such as disc golf and tennis rackets. Access to HomeMAKER Boxes removes the economic hurdles that can prevent many low income and rural populations from trying different skills or activities. Future plans include offering winter sports equipment, such as snowshoes and cross country skis, through collaboration with Nekoosa Public Schools, building on a citywide plan to identify public parks, trails, and outdoor recreational opportunities. The library is also recruiting members of a local homemakers organization to assist with sewing, crocheting, and knitting classes.

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The Vilas County Economic Development Corporation: Business Entrepreneurship, Broadband Expansion, and Fab Lab award celebrates the partnership between the Northland Pines School District and the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation, which has brought expanded internet capabilities and business learning opportunities for district students and a Fab Lab that serves students, staff members, and the community. The economic development corporation has created five business incubators in Vilas County, which give students first-hand access to how businesses are established, grown, and mature into successful enterprises. Students can meet with business owners and witness entrepreneurship in a rural community. The high school DECA team benefits from the economic development corporation's training which propelled them to compete at the national level. The group's efforts at broadband expansion in Vilas County helps rural students with their career goals by providing high speed internet access in schools, homes, and the entire community. The corporation worked with the district in obtaining two consecutive Fab Lab grants. They have donated all of the matching funds for the Fab Lab grants and have committed to continuing to do so for the three-year grant cycle.

The Spooner High School Aviation Club has provided hands-on learning experiences for Spooner students since 2008. The kit for the construction of a Zenith 701 experimental aircraft was purchased through a broad-based collaborative community fund-raising effort. Students have had the opportunity to participate through summer school and after-school programming. From participating in collaborative decision making, to learning about the principles of flight, to the use of specialized aviation tools, students have gained experiences that expose them to the growing and exciting field of aviation. Community members have provided a wide range of material and logistical support, including expertise in airframe and power plant construction and access to hanger space to properly store the aircraft. Excitement has grown during the past year as the plane has neared completion with the expectation that it will be airworthy by the end of the current school year. Alumni of the program have gone on to study aerospace engineering and other areas of engineering in college, with one alumnus working in the aerospace field. The project has drawn female participants, providing encouragement for young women in aviation and engineering. From project conception and fund-raising to aircraft construction, collaboration between the school district and community has been an essential element of this STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) learning experience.

The Vinery: An Outdoor Space that Celebrates Creativity and Learning is a collaborative project by the Winter School District, Winter Greenhouse, district alumni, and the community. By reclaiming an abandoned playground area, youth and local organizations came together to create a learning space that brings the community and school together. School art and poetry projects are displayed amid the vines of growing grapes, tomatoes, watermelon, and squash. Flowers and other plants donated through the Winter Greenhouse give a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Teachers provide students with hands-on projects that target science, math, literacy, and language arts. Both day and after-school students and staff utilize the vinery as a garden and learning space where students can play, learn, create, experiment, imagine, and display their work in an atypical setting, year-round. Mystery mailboxes, scattered throughout the vinery, provide the students with a one-of-a-kind "pen pal" experience to exchange letters with other grade levels. The future agenda includes continuing and environmental education programming, holding a school board meeting in the space, and working with district food service to create cooking projects with the harvests.

The Sugar River Sugar Bush program is a maple syrup project led by the Albany FFA Chapter. The project was started four years ago with 10 taps and a single class making a single gallon of syrup. It has grown into over 200 taps and 65 gallons last season. Growth is due to community involvement, with community members helping to tap, collect, and cook syrup. During the 2017 season, 26 community members donated 452 hours, and 23 FFA members worked 533 hours on the project. The cooking shanty constructed outside of the agriculture department will have a new cooker this year, with the help of FFA alumni, which will increase production four-fold. The syrup is bottled and sold with an FFA label at two locations in Albany, the school, and through all FFA members. Additionally syrup is donated to local charity auctions and for back to school night. Though led by the FFA Chapter, the project includes 4-year-old kindergarten through fourth-grade students in learning about tapping trees, cooking syrup, and final production. Proceeds from syrup sales support the Albany FFA Chapter.